



Bullet'n Backstory

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The Civil War Adventures of John Rowlands

One of the more unique experiences of the American Civil War belongs to a Welshman. John Rowlands was born in 1841 in the town of Denbigh, Wales, where he experienced a difficult childhood. His parents were not married, a social stigma with which he struggled. The boy's father soon died, and his mother abandoned him. His upbringing thus fell first to his maternal grandfather, then to a succession of extended family members, until he ended up in a poorhouse, where he experienced severe abuse. At age 18, Rowlands went to the United States, landing in New Orleans in 1859. Almost immediately, he befriended a wealthy trader who took Rowlands under his wing and gave him a job as a store clerk. The young man was so grateful that he officially changed his name to honor the man who had rescued him. When the Civil War broke out, the former John Rowlands succumbed to peer pressure and enlisted in the Confederate Army as part of the 6th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. A few months later, he was captured at the Battle of Shiloh and sent to Camp Douglas in Chicago. There, he agreed to become one of 5,600 galvanized Yankees (Confederate prisoners who joined the Union Army), but was discharged 18 days later due to illness.

After recovering, he served in the U.S. Navy for eight months before going AWOL in February 1865. Consequently, he may be the only Civil War participant to serve in two armies and one navy. After the war, he became a journalist and adventurer, embarking on expeditions to the Ottoman Empire and India, as well as conducting extensive travels in Africa.

On the latter continent, he achieved fame in 1871 when — under his adopted name, Henry Morton Stanley — he located a long-lost explorer on Lake Tanganyika (Tanzania), greeting him with the enduring quote, “Dr. Livingston, I presume?” ~ ~ Dr. Paul-Thomas Ferguson, JMC Archivist



Exploring Africa in 1872

Milan Army Ammunition Plant

Milan Army Ammunition Plant (MLAAP), near Milan, TN, dates from World War II. The War Department authorized construction of Milan Ordnance Depot and Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant in 1940, completing construction in January 1942. Proctor and Gamble owned and operated Wolf Creek, which produced ammonium nitrate, large- and small-caliber ammunition, fuses, and boosters. The federal government operated Milan, which stored and distributed munitions produced by Wolf Creek. The sites merged in 1943 to become Milan Ordnance Center. In 1945, the government took possession of the installation and renamed it Milan Arsenal. More name changes followed in the 1950s and 1960s: Milan Ordnance Plant, Milan Ordnance Depot, and finally Milan Army Ammunition Plant. As a result of BRAC 2005, Milan obtained the 155 mm artillery and 60 mm, 81 mm, and 120 mm mortar equipment from Kansas Army Ammunition Plant and the 105 mm and 155 mm artillery, Multiple Launch Rocket System and hand grenade, and 60 mm and 80 mm mortar equipment from Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant. MLAAP produced 40 mm grenades and 60 mm grenades until all production ended in December 2012. In June 2013, it relinquished command to a commander's representative. Milan maintains the capability to Load, Assemble, and Pack reliable medium-to-large caliber ammunition, while transitioning to a commercial distribution site. The installation includes 22,357 acres, 1,472 buildings, and 873 earth-covered storage magazines.



Patch from the original plant.

From the Archives



The JMC collection includes several pieces of artwork. In this example, *Saturday Evening Post* artist John Falter contrasts early American munitions manufacturing with 20th century techniques. The facilities silhouetted in the background are from Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant.

For a list of items in collections, see our Collection Finding Aids on the History SharePoint page:

Do you have historical items? If so, please contact the Archivist: Room 661
Dr. Paul-Thomas Ferguson - x20060 - paul.t.ferguson14.civ@mail.mil.

This Month in Military History

September 4, 476: Last western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus, abdicates to Odoacer, a German general. Curiously, the founder of Rome and the first emperor of Rome were named Romulus and Augustus.

September 11, 1940: Hitler begins Operation Seelion, the aborted plan to invade England.

September 18, 1759: French surrender to the British at Quebec City, ending the Battle of Quebec.

September 25, 1861: Gideon Welles, Secretary of the U.S. Navy, authorizes the enlistment of slaves.